

1 **Amendment to the Claims**

2 **In the Claims:**

3 Please cancel Claims 37-38 and 45-46.

4 Also, please amend Claims 22, 25, 28, 33, 39, 40, and 42-44 as follows:

5 1. (Original) A bending die for use in sheet metal forming, comprising:

6 (a) a first working surface extending longitudinally relative to a longitudinal axis
7 of the bending die;

8 (b) a second working surface extending longitudinally relative to the longitudinal
9 axis of the bending die and disposed adjacent to said first working surface; and

10 (c) a frame configured to provide support for said first and second working
11 surfaces, while enabling said first and second working surfaces to move relative to the frame, such
12 that a substantially fixed separation between adjacent edges of the first and second working surfaces
13 is maintained, regardless of a rotational angular displacement of either of the first and second
14 working surfaces.

15 2. (Original) The bending die of Claim 1, wherein said adjacent edges of said first and
16 second working surfaces are separated by a gap having a predefined width, said gap affecting a
17 configuration of the sheet metal formed with the bending die.

18 3. (Original) The bending die of Claim 1, wherein the adjacent edges of said first and second
19 working surfaces substantially abut one another.

20 4. (Original) The bending die of Claim 1, wherein said frame comprises a first section and a
21 second section, a position of said first section relative to said second section being adjustable to
22 enable a width of a gap separating the adjacent edges of said first and second working surfaces to be
23 adjusted to a desired dimension.

24 5. (Original) The bending die of Claim 1, wherein for each working surface:

25 (a) a center of rotation is associated with the working surface;

26 (b) relative to a portion of the working surface that is in contact with the metal
27 sheet during metal forming, the center of rotation is disposed proximate to an inner edge of said
28 portion; and

29 (c) regardless of the rotational angular displacement of the working surface, the
30 center of rotation remains substantially fixed.

1 6. (Original) The bending die of Claim 1, further comprising a hinge assembly disposed at
2 each end of the first and second working surfaces, each hinge assembly pivotally coupling said first
3 and second working surfaces together, such that a rotational displacement of one of said first and
4 second working surfaces results in a corresponding rotational displacement of the other one of said
5 first and second working surfaces, through an opposite rotational direction.

6 7. (Original) The bending die of Claim 6, wherein at least one hinge assembly includes a
7 return spring that applies a restoring force to return said first and second working surfaces to their
8 respective original positions after the sheet metal has been deformed in the bending die, and after a
9 force is no longer applied to deform the sheet metal and the sheet metal has been removed from the
10 bending die.

11 8. (Original) The bending die of Claim 6, wherein each hinge assembly comprises a pair of
12 sector gears, and a pair of rack gears that are mounted on the frame, each sector gear engaging a
13 different rack gear and being mounted at an end of different ones of the first and second working
14 surfaces.

15 9. (Original) The bending die of Claim 8, wherein said frame includes a generally U-shaped
16 portion defined by support members disposed adjacent to the end of one of the first and second
17 working surfaces, such that each rack gear is attached to a different support member.

18 10. (Original) The bending die of Claim 6, wherein said first and second working surfaces
19 are each generally rectangular in shape.

20 11. (Original) The bending die of Claim 6, wherein each hinge assembly further comprises a
21 first link and a second link joined by a pivot shaft, the first link being coupled to one sector gear, and
22 the second link being coupled to another sector gear.

23 12. (Original) The bending die of Claim 1, wherein each of said first and second working surfaces
24 comprises an angled upper surface having a shape selected to facilitate over-bending of the sheet metal.

25 13. (Original) The bending die of Claim 1, further comprising a resist element that applies a
26 resisting force to said first and second working surfaces, the resisting force countering at least in part
27 a force applied to deform the sheet metal.

28 14. (Original) The bending die of Claim 13, wherein the resist element comprises at least one
29 of a stripper, a spring, an elastomeric material, a hydraulic component, a collapsible support, a
30 movable support, and a pneumatic component.

1 15. (Original) The bending die of Claim 13, wherein said resist element comprises:

2 (a) a channel, said channel having a dimension substantially equal to said fixed
3 separation;

4 (b) an elongate block partially disposed in said channel, said elongate block
5 having a dimension smaller than said fixed separation; and

6 (c) a spring disposed in said channel so as to apply a restoring force against said
7 elongate block in opposition to a deformation of the metal sheet into the channel, such that said
8 elongate block is returned to an original position after the metal sheet is removed following the
9 deformation of the metal sheet.

10 16. (Original) The bending die of Claim 1, further comprising a sector gear coupled to each
11 one of said first and second working surfaces.

12 17. (Original) The bending die of Claim 16, further comprising a prime mover, and a
13 plurality of driven gears configured to drivingly couple with the prime mover, each driven gear being
14 disposed to engage one of said sector gears, such that as each driven gear is rotated, the
15 corresponding sector gear is rotated.

16 18. (Original) The bending die of Claim 17, further comprising a plurality of shafts, such
17 that each driven gear is coupled to one of said plurality of shafts.

18 19. (Original) The bending die of Claim 16, wherein said frame comprises a plurality of rack
19 gears, such that each sector gear engages a different rack gear.

20 20. (Original) The bending die of Claim 1, wherein each of said first and second working
21 surfaces comprises an elongate sector gear, and wherein said frame comprises opposed rack gears,
22 such that the elongate sector gear on each one of said first and second working surfaces engages a
23 different rack gear.

24 21. (Original) The bending die of Claim 1, further comprising a piston and a cylinder
25 assembly disposed adjacent to each of said first and second working surfaces, such that each one of
26 said first and second working surfaces is coupled to a different piston and cylinder assembly, each
27 piston and cylinder assembly applying one of a driving force and a resisting force to a different one
28 of the first and second working surfaces.

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1 22. (Currently Amended) The bending die of Claim 21, wherein each of said first and second
2 working surfaces comprises a wing, such that each wing ~~in~~ is coupled to a different piston and
3 cylinder assembly.

4 23. (Original) The bending die of Claim 21, wherein each piston and cylinder assembly
5 comprises one of a hydraulic system, a pneumatic system, and a mechanical system.

6 24. (Original) The bending die of Claim 21, wherein each piston and cylinder assembly is
7 coupled to an actuator that controls a movement of said first and second working surfaces.

8 25. (Currently Amended) A press brake for use in sheet metal forming, comprising:

9 (a) a first die extending longitudinally relative to a longitudinal axis of the press
10 brake, said first die including a working surface configured to support a work piece, said working
11 surface having an inner edge and an outer edge;

12 (b) a second die extending longitudinally relative to the longitudinal axis of the
13 press brake and disposed adjacent to said first die, said second die including a working surface
14 configured to support a work piece, said working surface having an inner edge and an outer edge; and

15 (c) a frame coupled to and supporting said first and second dies, while enabling
16 said first and second dies to move relative to the frame, such that each die is able to rotate about a
17 different respective center of rotation, and so that regardless of ~~an~~ any rotational angular
18 displacement of the die relative to the frame, the inner edge of the die is disposed closer to the
19 respective center of rotation of the die than the outer edge of the die.

20 26. (Original) The press brake of Claim 25, wherein a substantially fixed separation is
21 maintained between adjacent inner edges of the first and second dies, regardless of the rotational
22 angular displacement of either one of the first and second dies about its respective center of rotation.

23 27. (Original) The press brake of Claim 26, wherein said frame is adjustable, so that said
24 substantially fixed separation can be adjusted to a desired dimension, the desired dimension being
25 substantially maintained regardless of the rotational angular displacement of either of the first and
26 second dies.

27 28. (Currently Amended) The press brake of Claim 25, further comprising at least one spring
28 operatively coupled to at least one of the first and the second dies, producing a restoring force that
29 acts to return said first die and said second die to their respective original positions, after they have
30 been rotatably displaced.

1 29. (Original) The press brake of Claim 25, further comprising a hinge assembly disposed at
2 each end of the first and second dies, said hinge assemblies pivotally coupling said first and second
3 dies together, such that a displacement of one of said first and second dies results in a corresponding
4 displacement of the other of said first and second dies.

5 30. (Original) The press brake of Claim 29, wherein each hinge assembly comprises a pair of
6 sector gears, and a pair of rack gears mounted on the frame, each sector gear engaging a different
7 rack gear and being mounted at an end of different ones of the first and second dies.

8 31. (Original) The press brake of Claim 25, wherein each of said first and second dies
9 comprises an elongate sector gear, and wherein said frame comprises opposed rack gears, each
10 elongate sector gear of said first and second dies engaging a different rack gear.

11 32. (Original) The press brake of Claim 25, further comprising means for applying a force to
12 each of said first and second dies, the force being applied for one of:

- 13 (a) counteracting at least in part a force applied to deform the sheet metal; and
- 14 (b) causing the rotational angular displacement of said first and second dies, in
15 order to achieve a desired deformation of the sheet metal.

16 33. (Currently Amended) The press brake of Claim 32, wherein each of said first and second
17 dies ~~comprising~~ comprises a wing, each wing being coupled to said means for applying a force.

18 34. (Original) The press brake of Claim 32, wherein said means comprises one of a spring,
19 an elastomeric material, a hydraulic system, and a pneumatic system.

20 35. (Original) The press brake of Claim 32, wherein each of said first and second dies
21 comprises a sector gear, and wherein said means comprises a prime mover and a plurality of driven
22 gears that are drivingly coupled with the prime mover, to drivingly rotate the sector gear of each of
23 said first and second dies.

24 36. (Original) The press brake of Claim 25, wherein each of said first and second dies
25 comprises a sector gear, and said frame comprises a rack gear configured to engage each of said first
26 and second dies.

27 37. (Currently Canceled)

28 38. (Currently Canceled)

29 39. (Currently Amended) A method for forming a ~~work piece~~ sheet metal, comprising the
30 steps of:

- (a) providing adjacent longitudinally extending, rotatable support surfaces;
- (b) positioning the ~~work piece~~ sheet metal on the rotatable support surfaces; and
- (c) applying a deforming force to the ~~work piece~~ sheet metal, causing the rotatable support surfaces to rotate in opposite directions in response to the deforming force, while maintaining a substantially fixed separation between adjacent edges of the rotatable support surfaces as they are rotatably displaced, said ~~work piece~~ sheet metal being supported by the rotatable support surfaces when deformed by the deforming force into a desired shape.

8 40. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 39, further comprising the step of restoring
9 the rotatable support surfaces to an original position after the deforming force and the ~~work piece~~
10 sheet metal are removed.

11 41. (Original) The method of Claim 39, wherein the step of maintaining the substantially
12 fixed separation comprises the step of coupling the rotatable support surfaces to a framework with
13 gears that constrain a rotatable displacement of the rotatable support surfaces so that a width of a gap
14 between the adjacent edges of the rotatable support surfaces remains substantially fixed.

15 42. (Currently Amended) A method for forming a ~~work piece~~ sheet metal, comprising the
16 steps of:

43. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 42, wherein the step of applying a deforming force comprises the step of applying the deforming force to the work piece sheet metal with an upper tool that contacts the work piece sheet metal, such that the rotatable support surfaces rotatably move in response to the deforming force applied by the upper tool against the work piece sheet metal.

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1 44. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 42, wherein the step of applying a deforming
2 force to the ~~work piece~~ sheet metal comprises the step of applying the deforming force to the
3 rotatable support surfaces, such that the rotatable support surfaces apply the deforming force to the
4 ~~work piece~~ sheet metal, while an upper tool provides support for the ~~work piece~~ sheet metal.

5 45. (Currently Canceled)

6 46. (Currently Canceled)

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